A SERMON UPON THE EPIPHANY,

Preach't at

CHRIST-CHURCH,

IN THE

CITY of DUBLIN, 1672.

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A Sermon Preach't at *Christ-Church Dublin*, upon the Epiphany. 1672.

Matth. II. Ver. 10, 11.

When they saw the star, they rejoyced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young childe with Mary *his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrhe.*

TO discover the sweet consent and harmony betwixt the Old Testament and the New, in relation to the most efficacious and universal Redemption of all Man-

kind, by the coming of Christ into the world, tis enough to consider the Types and Prophesies of the one exactly fulfilled in the other. The miraculous call of the *Gentiles* unto the profession of the Christian Faith under the dispensation of the Gospel, was not only foretold by Prophesies, but likewise prefigured in several Types in the Writings of the old Law. Amongst the Prophesies, we find one most eminent Recorded, *Gen.* 9. 27. where righteous *Noah* then languishing under the burthen of an old Patriarchal age, and variety of Paternal cares, fill'd nevertheless with the sacred and vigorous Instincts of the Holy Ghost, who at a long prospect discovered unto him the large extent of a spiritual Kingdom by the *Messias*; in this his Prophetick Vision, cryes out, *Blessed be the Lord God of* Shem, *God shall enlarge* Japhet, *and he shall dwell in the Tents of Shem.* In which Prophesie, we find two things remarkable, to make our way more easie for this ensuing Discourse.

1. Here is a tacite promise of God's erecting a Tabernacle amongst the posterity of *Shem*, *i. e.* That *Shem*, with his successive Issue, should become the chosen people of God, with whom he would enter into a Covenant of Grace:

Grace and Mercy; which promiſe he made good afterwards unto *Shem*'s poſterity, the Children of *Iſrael*: For the *Iſraelites*, through God's miraculous mercy, being delivered out of the *Egyptian* Bondage, and conducted through the Wilderneſs into the promiſed Land, put off the Tabernacle of the Covenant, in which *the glory of the Lord appeared*, and forthwith God began to talk with them from amidſt two Cherubins; afterwards, that portable Tabernacle was chang'd into a fixt and magnificent Temple, erected by King *Solomon* in the holy City. This was the noble and onely Prerogative of the poſterity of *Shem*, the Glory of the Children of *Iſrael*.

2. We are given to Note here another Propheſie concerning *Japhet*, *That he ſhould inhabit the Tabernacle or Tents of* Shem. The meaning whereof is this, That the *Gentiles* to be born in time of the Seed of *Japhet*, were to be call'd into a cloſe fellowſhip and communion with the Church and People of the *Jewes*, under the new Oeconomy of the Goſpel. And many other Propheſies of the like nature there are up and down extant in the Books of *Moſes*, the *Pſalms*, and *Prophets*, that bear Teſtimony to the matter in hand.

As for the Typical Repreſentations, for our further confirmation in it, there are many of them alſo; as particularly, We have the Marriage of the *Saints* under the Old Law: *Moſes* took unto Wife an *Ethiopian* woman. And *David* took unto him two. *Ahinoam* the *Jezreelite*. And *Abigail* the *Carmelite*; which (according to the judgment of the ſoundeſt Divines) Typified, That our bleſſed Saviour, the Son of *David*, according to the fleſh, ſhould unite in that one body of the Church his Spouſe both *Jewes* and *Gentiles*. Likewiſe we have the Emblem of it in the Monarchical Government of King *David*, who extended his Empire over the *Idumæans*, *Philiſtines*, *Moabites* and *Syrians*, as well as over his Native Body Politick of the *Jewes*. We have the ſame no leſs prefigured by the Queen of *Sheba's* advancing out of the *South*, to behold the Greatneſs of *Solomon*: *viz.* That through the ſound of the Goſpel throughout the World, the Nations which were afar off, ſhould flock in, and voluntarily ſubmit themſelves to the Scepter of their heavenly *Solomon*.

By theſe, and many more ſuch like Prophetick Oracles, and Typical Adumbrations, the holy Men of old times beheld the dawning of

of this day, which fixteen hundred years ago, and upwards, was the moſt Illuſtrious that ever the inferiour World was bleſt with by the gracious Heavens; the Conſtellation of all whoſe greateſt Luminaries in their full ſplendor at once, if compar'd with it, were but as the light of a Candle to the Noon-day; for this day was illuminated by the Son of Righteouſneſs incarnate, and it's Illuminations augmented by the kind influences of an extraordinary Star, inviting the *Eaſtern Magi* to come forthwith, and pay a proportionable Homage to their new born King. A Star of wonders! that diſcovered Heaven it ſelf amidſt an earthly Houſe, an Houſe more glorious (for the Gueſt's ſake) and more clearly ſeen, than the Twelve imaginary Houſes of the *Aſtrologers* in the *Celeſtial Spheres*; for ſo it follows, *And lo, the Star which they ſaw in the Eaſt, went before them, till it came and ſtood over where the young childe was: And when they ſaw the ſtar, they rejoyced with exceeding great joy*, &c.

This Day, commonly called by the ancient Churches, *The day of holy Illuminations*, or *Feaſt of Lights*, hath been held famous for three Things,

Things, under that one name of *Epiphanies*, or Three manifeſtations of Chriſt to the World after divers manners.

Firſt, As he was made known to the Wiſe men, Strangers and *Gentiles* by a Star, called properly Ἐπιφανία.

Secondly, To the *Jewes*, when he was Conſecrated in Baptiſm, at which time the Holy Trinity appeared; the Father in his voyce, the Son in the fleſh, the Holy Ghoſt in the form of a Dove, thence called Θεοφανία.

Thirdly, To his own Countreymen of *Galilee*, in that houſe of Nuptials where he ſhew'd his firſt Miracle *of changing water into wine*, thence calléd Βαθφανία. All Three Commemorated upon this Day. The firſt, in the *Goſpel*; The other two, in the *two ſecond Leſſons* for the Day. Upon which account, it is ſtoried of *Julian* the Apoſtate and Emperour, That leaſt he ſhould be detected for an Idolater, whereof he was aſham'd, he was minded to appear in publick this Day, *which, in the month of* January (ſayes he) *the Chriſtians ſolemnize, and call by the name of* Epiphanies.

For the proſecution of the enſuing Diſcourſe ſutably to the Solemnity of this Feſtivity, I ſhall repreſent unto you:

Firſt,

First, *Some Obſervations upon the Star in the Text.*

Secondly, *Some Hiſtorical Notices concerning the* Magi.

Thirdly, *Some practical Inferences and Meditations upon both, in order as they come.*

Firſt, We will take into our conſideration the Nature and Qualities of this Star. If we conſult *Aſtronomers*, ſome of them will tell us, That it was one of the real prime Stars for Luſtre in the Firmament; which, though common to the view of All, yet, as to its Prognoſticks and Effects, underſtood onely by theſe *Perſian Sophi*.

Others ſay, That it was a ſydereal Conſtellation, or a Concourſe of ſeveral of the moſt reſplendent Stars, or biggeſt Planets, *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, and the reſt in the ſuperior Orbs.

Others there are, who will not rank it amongſt the Celeſtial, but Elementary fiery Meteors or Impreſſions, termed ſecond, or falſe Stars. St. *Chryſoſtom* and *Theophylact* upon the place, hold it to be that Angel which appeared unto the Shepherds near *Bethlehem*, telling them the tydings of our Saviours Nativity. And they have ſome colour for it, for it

was

was an uſual way with the Angels under the Old Law, to appear in the Radiations of Light, or the Vibrations of Fire: And beſides, under this quality they are deſcrib'd, *Pſal.* 104. 4. *He maketh his angels ſpirits: and his miniſters a flaming fire.* In ſuch a ſimilitude then, it is not altogether improbable, that an Angel might appear to theſe *Magi*, viz. in the ſhape of a flaming Star.

Laſtly, Some are of this Opinion, That it was the Holy Ghoſt, who now might as well tranſform himſelf into an indulgent Star, to direct the *Wiſe men* in their way to the New-born Jeſus, as afterwards he was pleaſed to deſcend upon him in the form of an innocent Dove at the time of his Baptiſm; as alſo long after that, at *Pentecoſt*, he deſcended again on his Apoſtles and the Brethren aſſembled together, in the likeneſs of Cloven fiery Tongues. But waving all theſe Conjectures and Probabilities, we may confidently affirm, That it was not only a new and real, but a miraculous and onely Star, in oppoſition to all other forementioned Opinions. An Angel it could not be, becauſe of the expreſs word of the Evangeliſt, who calls it *a Star.* And that it could not be one of the Comets, or falling Stars, 'tis

as

as clearly evident, becauſe both of their different motions and ſignifications from what this had: Thoſe being generally portentous of the death of Kings, and mighty men, the change or downfall of States and Kingdoms, and of thoſe dire Calamities that befall Mankind for their Outrages and Enormities: But This big with nothing but Peace, Happineſs, and eternal Salvation to the ſons of Men. That it could not be of the number of the firſt Stars or wandring Planets, is as evident as the former; for then certainly after ſuch a long Tract of Time and Revolution of the Heavens, from the fourth dayes Creation unto that of its appearance, it muſt needs have been ſeen. But all the *Aſtronomers* and *Hiſtorians* in the World, from the beginning, unto this day, are altogether ſilent about it (as to its appearance) ſave onely at that time. Neither indeed, could it in reaſon be one of the natural Stars of the *firſt Creation*, becauſe of *their periodical courſes*, and *limited progreſſions* from *Eaſt* to *Weſt*, from which they can never erre. Nor conſequently a *Comet* can it be, which (according to *Natural Philoſophy*) does generally obey the *motion* of that Star which *inflam'd it*. But this *ſalutiferous Star* deriving

not its deſigns from Nature, paſſeth from *Jeruſalem* towards *Bethlehem*, i. e. quite contrary from *North*, to *Southwards*, according to the *intention* of it's Maker, which was, That it ſhould make him manifeſt unto theſe hopeful Princely Pilgrims, to their great joy at their Arrival. See ſee! how conſtant and concern'd this new made *Luminary* is, in accommodating it ſelf to theſe earneſt Travellers! It neither haſtens, nor ſlackens its pace; neither does it in the leaſt *decline* the direct way, *turning* either to the right hand, or to the left; but with all the *circumſtances of obſequiouſneſs*, accompanies them in their progreſs upon the Road. This heavenly Candle, like the Soul of Man (which *Solomon* terms *the Candle of the Lord*) as if poſſeſt with ſuch a Soul, gives *light* all along to theſe noble Souls, conducts them to that very ſpot of ground where the ſweet Babe lay, the very *centre of their aims and deſires.*

Beſides all this, for further proof, we may conſider *its ſcituation*, that it was not in any of the *Celeſtial Orbs*, but in the *Air*, and that in the *lower Region of it too*; by which near diſtance (which cannot be ſuppoſed of the created Stars in the *beginning*, becauſe of their vaſt

vaſt remoteneſs from the earth) commodiouſly leading them on their way by *Night*, and *failing* not in the diffuſion of its beams by *Day* alſo (probably that they might ſee how to take a ſhorter cut unto their journies end) until it made a ſtand over the very Houſe where they were to congratulate their New born *King*. And after all this, when it had perform'd the Office deſign'd by the *All-wiſe Creator of it*, it ceaſed at once to *illuminate* and *exiſt*; being diſſolv'd at laſt by the ſame hand that made it into that *primitive matter* out of which he produc't it.

But how ſhould this ſpeechleſs Star (may ſome ſay) *be able to teach theſe Wiſe men ſo great a myſtery (hidden from the Ages) as this of the Nativity of the worlds Saviour? Was there nothing more in the matter think ye, that ſhould occaſion them to take ſo tedious, ſo difficult a journey (as this muſt needs be) and to proſecute with ſo much eagerneſs of mind, a thing, which on the* Jews *part at leaſt, if not from others, muſt needs create unto them a great deal of Envy and Detraction?*

Yes doubtleſs; This ſaving knowledge of God Incarnate, was taught them inwardly, by the *Illuminations of the Holy Spirit*, as well as

outwardly by the *light of a ſtar*. That ſupernatural *light within them*, *taught them all things of him, who was to be afterwards a light to lighten the* Gentiles, *as he* was then *the glory of his people* Iſrael. Who knows but that they might have had the view and peruſal of the five Books of *Moſes*, as probably as *Plato*, *Plutarch*, and ſeveral of the *Roman Poets*, *Gentiles* as well as they; of which laſt, the Learned do affirm that they had. Suppoſing which, or ſuppoſing it not, they might nevertheleſs, by the gracious Dictates of the Holy Ghoſt, be told of a certain Propheſie of one of their own Countreymen, *Balaam* by name, fam'd over all the *Eaſt* for a great *Diviner*, as you find it Recorded, *Numb.* 24. 17. *There ſhall come a ſtar out of* Jacob: Which Propheſie does ſo exactly agree with the Wiſe mens queſtion and reaſon (*Where is he that is born King of the* Jewes, *for we have ſeen his ſtar?*) that theſe two Stars, theſe two Texts, do ſeem wholly and directly to face and enlighten each other. There goes a Story therefore to this purpoſe (which I ſhall leave to your grave Judgments to think of it (as you pleaſe) as to its *Credibility*) That the *Perſian Magi* elected out of their own number Twelve, which

which year by year were to go up to the top of the Victorial Mountain ſo called, and there abiding three dayes, were wont to waſh themſelves over, and pray to God, that he would manifeſt unto them that Star of which *Balaam* had propheſied. Upon the day of the Nativity therefore abiding upon the Hill full of expectations, the Star appears unto them in the ſhape of a fair lovely Boy, with a Croſs ſhining over his Head, and ſaying, Make all the haſte you can into the Land of *Judæa*, and there you ſhall find that King whom you ſo greedily look after. Whether there be any Truth in this ſtory or not, it matters not much: We cannot but blame however the vain and profane Confidence *of impious Aſtrologers*, in avouching, That the Wiſe men attain'd unto the knowledge of Chriſt his Nativity, by the Rules and Methods of that their Science, which is chiefly converſant about the natural and ordinary Stars: For never was it heard of, that any other Star but this, did ever ſignifie the Birth of Chriſt Jeſus. Neither can it be believed, that this it ſelf could do it effectually of it ſelf, unleſs the Holy Ghoſt had infus'd into their minds at the ſame time the true Notions of this heavenly knowledge, and had

had ſown in their hearts the ſeeds of a ſound Faith, that they ſhould believe it. But not to be beholding to any the leaſt ſuſpected Author, we have beſides a very ancient and authentick one to enlighten us about this Star, *Chalcidius* by name, a Platonick Philoſopher, who liv'd and wrote a little after Chriſt. He Commenting upon *Plato* his *Timæus*, after he had recounted many ſtrange portentous things about the Stars, ſubjoins a relation of this at laſt: *Eſt & alia ſanctior & venerabilior hiſtoria, quæ perhibet ortum Stellæ inſolitæ*, &c. *There is* (ſayes he) *a more holy and venerable ſtory which gives out the riſe of a new Star, not foretelling Mortality, or any fatal Accidents to Mankind, but the deſcent of God Incarnate, for grace and ſalvation to ſinful Mortals. The obſervation of which by the* Chaldeans *they verifie, who preſented the ſame God-man with gifts of Gold, Frankincenſe and Myrrhe.*

Having now given you a ſufficient account of the Star in the Text. Our *Meditations*, as to practical Inferences, ſhall *fix* and *expatiate* themſelves thus.

You have taught us, *O ye wiſe Princes of the Eaſt*, or rather that Star that taught you, hath inſtructed us to *ſympathize* with you in the real

real manly expreſſions of an exceeding rejoycing & triumphant joy. We fall down therfore, and with humble *adorations* congratulate the *riches of thy mercy, O Lord of life*, for that thou waſt pleaſed, through the *miraculous conception of holy* Mary, to give unto us the aſſurance of eternal *happineſs*, by the word *Incarnate*; and to declare the ſame, by the *apparition* of a new created Star, to thoſe firſt fruits and forerunners of us miſerable *Gentiles*: From the conduct of whom, by the light of this material One to thee, *O holy Jeſus*, who art that Star of *Jacob* foretold, *that bright morning Star*, acknowledged from thine own mouth, *Rev.* 22. 16. We who are of the ſame ſtock and lineage, as we do ſhare in the ſame *priviledges* by faith, ſo do we exult with an equal gladneſs, and unſpeakably great joy. For, that a Star ſhould be lighted up on purpoſe, a Star that portends not only temporal, but everlaſting happineſs to the forlorn Souls of *Rebel criminals*, and ſuch a Star as leaves them not, till it have brought them to the child Jeſus, even to God himſelf; This affords matter ſure for exceeding great joy. For if we are bound to pay unto God all chearful homage and adoration for that his general providence

over

over us, in making the ordinary Stars to dance attendance upon us, to ſhine, to lead, to fight ſometimes in their courſes, to effectuate health in our bodies, and *fertility* in the Fields for our ſakes (Which made holy *David* contemplating that ſpangled Canopy, now our covering, hereafter to be our Footſtool, in an holy extaſie to cry out, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou thus viſiteſt him, viſiteſt him with Stars!*) What a noble joy and gratulation ſhould the conſideration of God's eſpecial Providence over us *Gentiles*, produce in our Souls, in ſending us a Star, in ſetting up for us a Standard of light, to invite and guide us, to warm and cheriſh us, to ſupport and repleniſh us with *the All-healing Benedictions* of a far more glorious Star, our Sun of Righteouſneſs. How exactly (to our great comfort be it ſpoken) do the Type and the thing Typified agree! In that God, who of Old was pleaſed to lead the children of *Iſrael* through the Wilderneſs into the Regions of the *Gentiles*, *by the pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night:* here now in like manner, he leads the *Magi* the Forefathers of the *Gentiles*, into the Land of *Judæa*, by the conduct of a Star: To ſhew,

That

That both people, as well *Jewes* as *Gentiles*, muſt become one ſheepfold under Chriſt the one great ſhepherd of their ſouls. Neither is the *Prediction*, *Iſa.* 60. 1, 3. leſs clearly verified, *Ariſe, ſhine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. And the Gentiles ſhall come to thy light, and Kings to the brightneſs of thy riſing.*

Alas! what were we? we were a people ſitting in darkneſs, and might have continued unto this day groveling in the thick darkneſs of Ignorance, Infidelity, and horrours of Idolatry! Was it not now a *manifeſtation* of miraculous mercy, a matter of ſuperabundant joy, that God ſhould thus *diſcriminate* us of the latter Times, from Nations far more worthy than our ſelves, pulling us like Brands out of the fire, and ſetting us above others, as a Candle upon a Buſhel, and enkindling this Candle with a Star! When we lay *ſtinking* dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, he ſaid unto us, *Awake, and live by the light and life of this Star. When we were without hope, and without God in the world*, as the Apoſtle tells us, *ſtrangers to the Covenant of promiſe, Aliens to the Commonwealth of* Iſrael, *wilde Olive-trees, Dogs under the Table* (in our Saviours terms)

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poor, blind, miſerable, and naked Orphans; even then was he pleaſed to eſpouſe us unto himſelf in the bonds of an everlaſting kindneſs, and to make us the ſubjects of the liberal effuſion of his graces, and the ſweet influences of a ſaving one, pointed at by a material Star. By the light of this, we are ſurrounded with all other pure, profitable, benign, and pleaſing lights: with the ſplendour of Chriſt Jeſus his perſonal excellencies, with the pure luſtre of God's holy Word to guide our Feet into the wayes of peace, with the refreſhing Rayes of ſupernatural grace, faith and hope through his merits; with the quickning vertue of his Ordinances, Sacraments, Letanies and Prayers of the Holy Church. All which make up a Conſtellation of ſweet Influences of the power of God unto our ſalvation. O Sun of Righteouſneſs! O brightneſs of the Eternal Father! Riſe thou upon us with healing under thy wings! Diſplay the beams of thy ſaving countenance upon our ſouls! Diſpell the dark miſts *of Sin and Infidelity* which overcloud our *minds* and *wills!* Dry up the damps *of Original Concupiſcence* in our *hearts*, by the warmth of a mighty grace, as theſe earthly ones are done away by the heat of that burning fiery

Globe

Globe above us. That at the laſt, becoming the ſons and daughters *of Epiphanies*, we may walk as becomes Children *of the Father of Lights*, and as Brethren *of the Son and Heir of Lights*, ſhining in all manner of Purity and Integrity throughout the whole courſe of our Converſations.

Secondly, Now follows as a ſecond Branch of my propounded method, that in the ſame order by way of *Hiſtorical Narration*, and *profitable Inferences*, we ſpeak ſomewhat, and more briefly of the *Perſian Magi*.

Of theſe early *Votaries*, and true *Converts* to the *Son of God*, and *Diſcipline of his Kingdom*, there is a great Controverſie amongſt the moſt *eminent of the Fathers*, whether they were Kings or no. But, though the late Learned Dr. *Hammond* be for the Affirmative, following St. *Auguſtine*, St. *Jerome* and *Tertullian* in this point, yet *waving Diſputes of this nature*, we may take it for granted, *That they were men of Princely dignity at the leaſt.* For the name *of Magi* both in *Perſia* and *Arabia*, was a name of men *highly eminent for their extraction*, as well as for *profound Learning* and *Employ*. That in general they were *Princes* and

Philoſophers of the higheſt rank, it ſeems to be clear, from the Character that *Cicero* gives them in his learned Book *de Divinatione*, where he ſayes, *Nullum Perſarum Regem eſſe potuiſſe qui non ante Magorum diſciplinam ſcientiamque percepiſſet, i. e.* That he was utterly uncapable to be King of *Perſia*, who had not been in ſome good meaſure experienc'd in the Diſcipline and Wiſdom of the *Magi*. And that they were men of the greateſt ſtate and place, if not Kings themſelves, yet Kings Privy Counſellors, he aſſures us by another Character that he gives them elſewhere in the ſame Book, *Sine auctoritate & conſilio Magorum* (ſayes he) *conſtat ne ipſis quidem Regibus quicquam agere licere.* Without the counſel and authority of the *Magi*, even unto Kings themſelves, was it never permitted to act in any important matter whatſoever. And again, magnifying another *high qualification* in them, he gives their name of (Μάγοι) to denote not only a peculiar ſort of Wiſe men thoroughly inſtructed in all the *Liberal Arts and Sciences* (as was ſaid before) but who had likewiſe a grand Concern about Sacred Things: *Magus altiſſimarum rerum Cultor & Interpres habetur.* Doubtleſs they were profoundly skill'd in Mathematicks

thematicks and Philoſophy; great Inquiſitors into and Interpreters of the *Phænomena* of Nature, of the Nature and Counſels of their Gods, of the Cauſes and Events of Things: The onely Curators of Religious Matters in Doctrine, Worſhip, Vows, Prayers, Sacrifices, and of whatever elſe appertained thereunto. They were briefly the ſame in their Countrey, what the *Gymnoſophiſts* were amongſt the *Indians*, the *Philoſophers* amongſt the *Græcians*, the *Wiſe men* amongſt the *Latines*, the *Druids* amongſt the *Gaules*, the *Chaldæans* amongſt the *Aſſyrians*. Therefore does our Holy Evangeliſt entitle them with the name of Μάγοι upon theſe forementioned accounts of their eminent Birth, Office and Learning; and not from their illuſive dealing with King *Herod* in not returning unto him according to his Injunction, as ſome do imagine. It is the judgment of St. *Chryſoſtom*, That they had this name given them from thoſe unlawful Arts, which he ſuppoſeth them to have practiſed; and as we are apt to call in our Tongue (but in the worſt ſenſe) your wiſer ſort of men Wizards and Magitians. But if ſuch theſe men were, we are bound the rather to admire the goodneſs of God, who was pleaſed to call at ſo

great

great a distance, and from so deep an abyss of Impiety and Hell, the very Priests and Votaries of Devils, the Forerunners and First fruits of us (once such sinful *Gentiles*, or worse haply) to the adoration of his Son but just new born, and that too by the imperious message of a new-made Star. And thus much may suffice as touching their persons, and personal perfections, which may minister unto us several good Documents and Consolations.

1. In that they were *Gentiles*, once a despised people, we are given to understand, that it is Gods free grace and mercy through them, to open unto us a door of life, and having pull'd down that partition wall, to give them and us a free entrance into the promised rest.

2. And if *Gentiles*, then sinners too. From hence springs light and comfort to all disconsolate Souls, languishing under the burthen of their sins; for if Heaven, notwithstanding our deep defilement by original and actual transgressions, vouchsafe to favour us with a gracious look, nor they, nor we, nor any Nation or person need fear to be excluded the Kingdom of God, if they obey the call.

3. Great

3. Great Perſonages, they were foretold in *Pſalm* 72. under the notion of the Kings of *Arabia* and *Saba* bringing gifts, as moſt interpret that place of them. Our Saviours Queſtion, *How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven?* And St. *Paul's* Negation, *That not many mighty, not many noble of this world are called*, might well enough ſtartle and confound the hopes of all the great men of the earth, were it not for this particular inſtance of Free-grace; that the *Perſian Magi*, great Princes of the *Eaſt*, rich and honourable, may claim an Intereſt in Chriſts Star, as well as the poor, and thoſe that are termed the Off-ſcowring of the World.

4. Nor does their great Learning, or myſterious knowledge, any way debar them from being *Proſelytes to Chriſtianity.* The Apoſtles Intimation of, *not many wiſe*, *not many learned*, might well again amaze and deaden the hearts of great Scholars, were it not, that theſe accompliſht Heroes *of Learning*, had a portion in the Star that leads to Chriſt; as well as they had an accurate knowledge of the Stars above them, to gratifie the nobler ſenſes of their intellectual Faculties, as one day they ſhall have them under them, for the glo-

ry of their whole beatifi'd Beings. The knowledge of natural things, and natural reaſon it ſelf, was firſt ſet up in the Soul, as a Star or Candle of the Lord, to lead man to the *admiration of his Divinity*. And theſe Renowned Princes, who had the full uſe and benefit of the ſame, employed it wholly to the right end. But ſuch (alas!) is the Corruption of theſe laſt Ages of the World, That inſtead of coming unto God and Chriſt by Faith and Obedience (Things conſentaneous with reaſon advanc't to the higheſt pitch) our gallant Atheiſts do (as much as in them lies) endeavour to depart from them, not only by their vicious Lives, but to baniſh alſo the very exiſtence of a Deity out of their Thoughts, and at the ſame time reaſon out of their Souls. So that quite contrary to our *New-quaking Luminaries*, who do ſo highly magnifie and extend *the Light within them*, theſe dark Souls labour to put out all manner of Light both within and without them. And however theſe new Anarchical Lights may account of Princes, and great Learned men, as Enemies unto him who was repreſented by this Star, nevertheleſs this Star ſhines unto them with as benign and efficacious Influences, as unto any; nay, with more than un-

to

to the Inferiour Orders of men. Mean and ordinary Capacities, such as Women and Shepherds, must have sutable Guides to lead them to Christ. It is for *Kings*, and *Learned Sages* onely to be led by *Stars*, and Tokens of stupendous Providence to the *veneration of the Christian Faith*. Their hearts are larger, and their mental strengths are greater, and their examples of greater force, to *capacitate* them for greater Impressions, and to advance the Kingdom of Christ Jesus by their exemplary Conformity, as much as to enlarge their earthly Empires by Conquest or victorious Policy. So as what one said of Government, *That it was the best, when Kings do Philosophize, and Philosophers Reign:* I will say the like of both, with this reciprocal Inversion, *That it is the best of Governments, when Kings and Philosophers do submit unto Christian Laws, and when Christian Laws are supported and defended by the secular power and policy of such great men. And thrice happy is such a people, whose Supreme does defend the Faith with his pious Life, as much as with his Sword and Shield.*

Secondly, In the next place we are to consider,

1. These Wise mens advancing on their Journey.

2. Their Deportment, *They fell down and worshipped.*

3. Their Congratulatory Accostment, *They presented him with offerings.*

1. Of the first of these. Rowz'd up by the inward Inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and outward sight of this inviting Star to wait upon their spiritual King; for the quicker dispatch they call forthwith for their *Dromedaries*, and away they come. Many a weary step had they trod, many an unprofitable Question had they ask't, but neither *yet* do they break off their pace or expectations. They knew full well, that it would prove a long Journey from their Homes to *Jerusalem*, and a troublesome one too; as being to pass through the Wildernesses of *Arabia Deserta*, and over the Rocks of *Arabia Petræa*. The uncouthness of the way, the danger of the narrow passages infamous for Robbers, and dreadful for Precipices, the Inconveniencies of the Journey, nor yet the uncertainty of it (because of the disappearance of the Star for a season) could no whit deter them from their design. For Faith and Love brook no Impediments, know no Difficulties

culties in the ſearch after the beloved Jeſus. To have made many ſuch Journies, to have enlarg'd their Empire, would have been grateful to ambitious minds: but this is none of their ambition; and if it had been, they had juſt reaſon to ſay, *What would it profit us to gain the whole world, and to loſe our own ſouls? or rather, to loſe the ſweet Jeſus, who is the life of our ſouls.* What a reproach now muſt all this be to the *Chriſtians* of our dayes? How many trivial excuſes ſhall ſcare many of us from adhering to that Faith we do profeſs? 'Tis a faſhion now adayes to reaſon our ſelves out of our *Devotion* and *Religion*, and to object any thing to ſave our pains in the great Concerns about Chriſt and our Souls. The extremity of a little cold weather, or the dampneſs of a rainy Morning, the cold Snow under our Feet, or the Wind whiffling about our Cloaths, ſhall eaſily keep us off from coming to the Houſe where Jeſus delights to dwell, from coming out to worſhip him in his Sanctuary. But what ſtrikes deeper at the root *of Religion*, is, the vile reaſonings of reprobate minds againſt *Chriſtian Obedience*. Some of whom plead againſt the neceſſity of it: Becauſe the Goſpel, ſay they, *is a meſſuage of peace*

and rest to their souls, and thence they think themselves wholly disingag'd from all kind of duty. Others will tell you of an utter Impossibility to perform the Commands, because they are weak and impotent Creatures by nature, and therefore they can do nothing at all of themselves, and the best righteousness that they have, is but as menstruous Rags in Gods esteem. The Well besides is deep, and they have not wherewith to draw. A third sort there is who are much aggrieved at the bitterness of it, saying, *These Laws are troublesom and unsavoury, full of sadness and melancholly, void of good fellowship and recreation, and subject to continual afflictions and anxieties of mind.* These pious *Magi* met with no such Bugbears, made no such Demurs upon the way: They had more generous Apprehensions, and more inflam'd Affections towards Christ and his Discipline. Ah! Let us make these Wise men our pattern and example; the Wisest men in the World for this one Act of coming unto Christ, though they had been meer Fools in all other respects whatsoever. Nor could they themselves but confess, That they carried back with them a far more nobler wisdom, and more costly treasures by infinite degrees, than they

they brought with them; and inſtead *of periſhable*, they returned with *immortal Diadems in their Crowns.*

Come away then readily without pretences or delay, with the eye of a ſtrong Faith, and the motions of a pure love, and pay your homage to the holy Jeſus. The riſing Sun, we are told, is the *Perſians* God; and theſe *Wiſe Eaſtern Votaries* now much wiſer than before, do but Tranſlate *their Adoration* from one Sun unto another; from that *material* but *periſhable* Sun in the *Firmament*, to this *material* but *immortal* Sun of Righteouſneſs Incarnate. And *this proſtration of the Body*, it is the firſt part *of their Worſhip.* A leſſer *Adoration* would not have been proportionable to ſo great a Bleſſing, as the ſight *of a Saviour.* For it ſeems moſt reaſonable, *That his aſſuming of a Body to his Divine Nature, ſhould challenge the humble obeyſance of our whole bodies now; his coming down from Heaven, our falling down upon the Earth; his ſo great Humiliation, the greateſt expreſſion of our Humility.* And this we ſhall do, though not in poſture, yet in a ſpiritual ſenſe the ſame and in effect, if we keep *our bodies veſſels of honour, pure and untainted from the luſts of the fleſh, and offer our members as inſtru-*

ments of righteouſneſs unto holineſs. Now this *bodily proſtration* is not wholly and truly *Adoration* of it ſelf; It is the Intention of the mind that turns this outward expreſſion of the body *into Adoration:* and it is the *Soul* that ſpecifies the Worſhip, and gives it both its nature and its name. The *Soul* then conſecrates its ſelf with all *its Faculties* unto God in all Acts of *Devotion* and *Adoration* at the ſame time with the *Bodies humiliated proſtration.* The Apoſtles *Exhortation* therefore may haply refer to this, *Therefore glorifie God in your bodies, and in your ſouls, which are Gods,* 1 Cor. 6. Otherwiſe to fall down *in humility* with the body, and lift up the ſoul with pride; to give him an outward reſpect, and inwardly to ſlight him, is to uſe Chriſt as the Souldiers did, worſhip him in a mockery, ſaying, *Hail King, and ſmite him.*

Now Laſtly, After that we have conſidered how the Princely *Magi* have made a twelve days journey out of the *Eaſt,* of an 150 *German,* 600 *of Engliſh miles,* according to the *Computation* of *Geometricians* and *Divines,* poſting it all along with *Dromedaries* laden with the coſtly wealth of the Countrey, to make Preſents thereof to the King of Glory; *What ſhall we think of our ſelves, if we ſhould come empty-handed,*

handed, to congratulate the ſame our King? Open therefore the treaſuries of your ſouls, dear Chriſtians I beſeech you, and ſee whether they will not furniſh you with preſents of gold, frankincenſe and myrrhe: for with ſuch preſents God is well pleaſed, whether it be as to the congruity of our apprehenſions of him, or the nature of that ſpiritual homage we pay unto him. For, as to the firſt, *in offering gold*, we acknowledge him to be *King*, and ſo pay *Tribute* unto him. *In offering frankincenſe*, we confeſs him to be God, which is the *oblation of the Altar*. And *in offering myrrhe*, we profeſs he ſhould dye like men; for *myrrhe* is generally made uſe of in *Sepultures* and *Embalmings*. This for the *Theological* ſenſe.

2. If we look upon the moral ſenſe of this Allegory, we may affirm, *That they are the ſeveral Chriſtian vertues that are repreſented by theſe material Emblems, in the practice of which we make him moſt acceptable Preſents.* For God looks upon us as offering him gold, if we patiently and conſtantly ſuffer for the Faith, which according to the Apoſtle St. *Peter, is far more precious in his eye, than gold that periſheth, though it be tryed ſeven times in the fire.* The ſame we do, when we keep his Commandments, which according to the *Pſalmiſt, is more deſirable than gold,*

gold, yea, than much fine gold. And no leſs we do, when we relieve the poor, feed the hungry, and cloath the naked; in doing which, though the diſtreſſed receive the benefit, yet the offering is made unto God, and he takes it as done unto himſelf; *for to do good, and communicate, with ſuch like ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.*

2. We offer up *frankincenſe* unto him in our daily prayers and devout ejaculations: in our hopes and ſure confidence in his mercies: in our humility and obedience to his holy Laws: which (as *frankincenſe* is binding and reſtringent) are the onely binders and reſtrainers of our inordinate wills and paſſions.

3. Laſtly, If we mortifie our Affections upon the earth (*for myrrhe hath a quality in it of killing worms*) if we keep our bodies chaſte and pure (*for myrrhe is a ſoveraign antidote againſt all impurities, and the inſiliences of a wanton mind*) and if in the bitterneſs of our Souls repent us of all our paſt ſinſul Extravagancies (*for myrrhe is of a bitter nature*) then do we truly preſent him with *offerings of myrrhe.* Thus the *Perſian* Wiſe men did; and if we their Off-ſpring would maintain the reputation of *Wiſe men*, let us do ſo too.

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